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Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 33520 130956Z
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 /029 W
---------- 107438 /22
R 130911Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7082

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, TH
SUBJECT: LABOR TROUBLES AHEAD?

1. IN A WIDE-RANDING TELEVISED SPEECH THAT INCLUDED A SWIPE AT THE PRESS AND AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN IMPENDING VIETNAMESE INVASION, INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK SUNTHORAWET CLAIMED THAT RIGHT WING LABOR GROUPS WERE PLANNING TO MAKE A SERIES OF DEMANDS ON MANAGEMENT THAT COULD RESULT IN A GENERAL STRIKE ON DECEMBER 15. SAMAK'S REMARKS WERE MET WITH SURPRISE BY LABOR LEADERS WHO REPLIED QUOTE CONSIDER THE SOURCE. UNQUOTE

2. SAMAK EARNED THE EMNITY OF THAI LABOR UNIONS IN JANUARY OF 1976 WHEN HE BLAMED THE QUOTE RICE STRIKE UNQUOTE ON COMMUNISTS AND THEIR LABOR UNION SYMPATHIZERS. SAMAK REFUSED TO WITHDRAW THE REMARKS DESPITE LABOR UNION EFFORTS TO ASSURE SAMAK'S DEFEAT IN THE APRIL 1976 ELECTIONS. LEADERS OF THE FORMER THAI LABOR COUNCIL (TLC) HAVE NO IDEA WHAT SAMAK WAS REFERRING TO IN THIS NEW ATTACK AND IT IS POSSIBLE THAT UNION DISATISFACTION WITH THE ATTITUDES
OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THE REFUSAL OF THE POLICE TO GRANT PERMISSION FOR UNION MEETINGS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S REFUSAL TO DISCUSS THE RELEASE OF ARRESTED ALBOR ACTIVISTS, MAY HAVE LED SAMAK TO MAKE THE REMARKS IN ORDER TO DISCREDIT THE LABOR UNION CRITICS.

3. IN ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE CHILL THAT HAS SETTLED OVER LABOR AFFAIRS, A RECENT ASIAN AMERICAN FREE LABOR INSTITUTE (AAFLI) SEMINAR FOR ALBOR EDUCATORS WAS MONITORED BY THREE PLAIN CLOTHES POLICE DESPITE ITS APOLITICAL THEME. IN THE
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MEDDLE OF ONE SESSION AT LEAST FIVE FULLY UNIFORMED POLICE

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PARADED THROUGH THE SEMINAR AND REQUESTED A LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS DESPITE THE FACT COMPLETE INFORMATION ON THE SEMINAR HAD BEEN PROVIDED BY AAFLI A WEEK EARLIER IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE REQUIRED POLICE APPROVAL. THE MORNING AFTER INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK MADE HIS REMARKS, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT CANCELLED HIS PLANNED APPEARANCE AT THE SEMINAR CLOSING CEREMONY.
WHITEHOUSE

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